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HINDU SPIRITUAL LEADER PAYS A VISIT TO USD

"Chidananda is the pearl...the pearl of India."

Father Henri le Saux

Highlighting the ecumenism embodied in Catholic teachings, the University of San Diego's Department of Theological and Religious Studies is sponsoring a talk by a world-renowned Hindu spiritual leader, often called the "St. Francis of India."

Swami Chidananda will speak at the University of San Diego's Hahn University Center, Forum A, on Wednesday, October 24, at 8 p.m. The title of his talk is "From Darkness to Light: A Hindu Perspective on the Spiritual Destiny of Humankind."

As head of the Sivananda Ashram ("ashram" means spiritual community), Swami Chidananda is known to many Christians as the preceptor of Sister Vandana, a Catholic Religious of the Sacred Heart, who founded the first Christian ashram in Rishikesh, India.

Chidananda was linked to St. Francis by the lepers of the Himalayan foothills. He served the lepers for many years during his youth -- first as a selfless nurse and later as the organizer of many leper colonies. Today, Swami Chidananda is the spiritual

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) head of the Sivananda Ashram in the village of Rishikesh, an ancient place of pilgrimage located on the bank of the Ganges in India's Himalayan foothills.

Raised in an orthodox and devoted Hindu family, Chidananda graduated from Loyola College, Madras. This training in a Catholic institution left an indelible impression on him on the Christian ideals of humanitarian service. Highly respected by India's Christian community, which is dubious of the claims of sanctity of many popular Hindu gurus, he has been called "the embodiment of ecumenism, of Hindu-Christian dialogue."

For more information, please contact Kathleen Dugan at USD's Department of Theological and Religious Studies at 260-4756.

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NOTE: Swami Chidananda is making his way from the East Coast to San Diego and is available for phone interviews. To schedule, please call Professor Lance Nelson at 287-7511.

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